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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

1:15
P.M. - E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

No. 177

'GOOD FARMING PAYS'

September 13, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Fortunes Washed Away?

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind...

ANNOUNCER

"Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes". That historic command, as every schoolboy knows, was given at the battle of Bunker Hill. Many a brave American fell at that battle, among them General Joseph Warren. Warren County, Ohio, bears his name now. Here is one of the most fertile counties of the Buckeye State, with undulating fields of corn and clover and wheat, a landscape of coves and glens and ravines, tall timber and rich soil along the Little Miami River, squirrels and rabbits along Turtle Creek and Newman's Run. And just outside of Franklin is a small farm -- the farm of Taylor C. Dennis, scene of the 177th consecutive episode of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

23 Jan 1

ANNOUNCER

Taylor C. Dennis has only a small farm -- just 32 acres, and I wouldn't say that it's typical of Warren County. But he is a conservation-minded farmer. Just the other day a weary, dusty traveler came around to the barn where he was milking...(FADE)

SOUND: Cow being milked...

TRAMP

I beg your pardon, but could you give a poor old man a meal?

DENNIS

What's that? Who're you?

TRAMP

I was just wanting a bite to eat. As for me, I'm nobody. Just a bum on the road.

DENNIS

You're able bodied.

TRAMP

Yes, I know, but...

DENNIS

You look plenty healthy.

TRAMP

Yes, I am...but if you don't think you can afford to feed me, I'll be getting along. I just thought...

DENNIS

My wife'll feed you. Sit down there 'til I finish milking.

TRAMP

Thanks.

DENNIS

There's no need for any able bodied man in this great country of America to go hungry or go on relief, for that matter. Why, I remember how times were in Kentucky -- Meniffee County, it was -- that's where I came from 20 years ago...(FADE)

SOUND: Woman grinding corn into meal...

FLORA

I declare, Dennis, this corn meal is as poor as the yield was.

DENNIS

The yield was none too good, Flora.

FLORA

Gettin' worse every year. No wonder dad packed up and moved to Ohio.

DENNIS

I hate to admit it, being born and raised in these parts, but I'm becoming convinced that Meniffee County just wasn't meant for farming.

FLORA

You know I'm not a-complainin'.

DENNIS

I know that.

FLORA

But these hill farms, with chickens worth a nickel apiece...I declare, our forebears settled here, and they could just as well have gone on to Bourbon County.

DENNIS

Fine land over there in the bluegrass.

FLORA

Must be.

DENNIS

Not so much soil erosion like we've got around here. You know, they tell me that this soil of Kentucky was a sight to behold once upon a time. In fact, I've heard tell that one minister of the gospel wound up his sermon saying, "In short, my brethren, Heaven is a Kentucky of a place."

FLORA (laughs, then pauses)

What are we going to do, Dennis?

DENNIS

Maybe we'd better sell out and follow your dad to Ohio. I know this much, Flora. We're not going to starve. If a man is able and willing to work, and takes care of the land, he won't go hungry. (FADE)

SOUND: Occasional clatter of dishes...

DENNIS (fading in)

....and so that's what I'm telling you. The land can be good to you, if you treat it right. Give him some more green beans, Flora. We raised those beans right here.

TRAMP

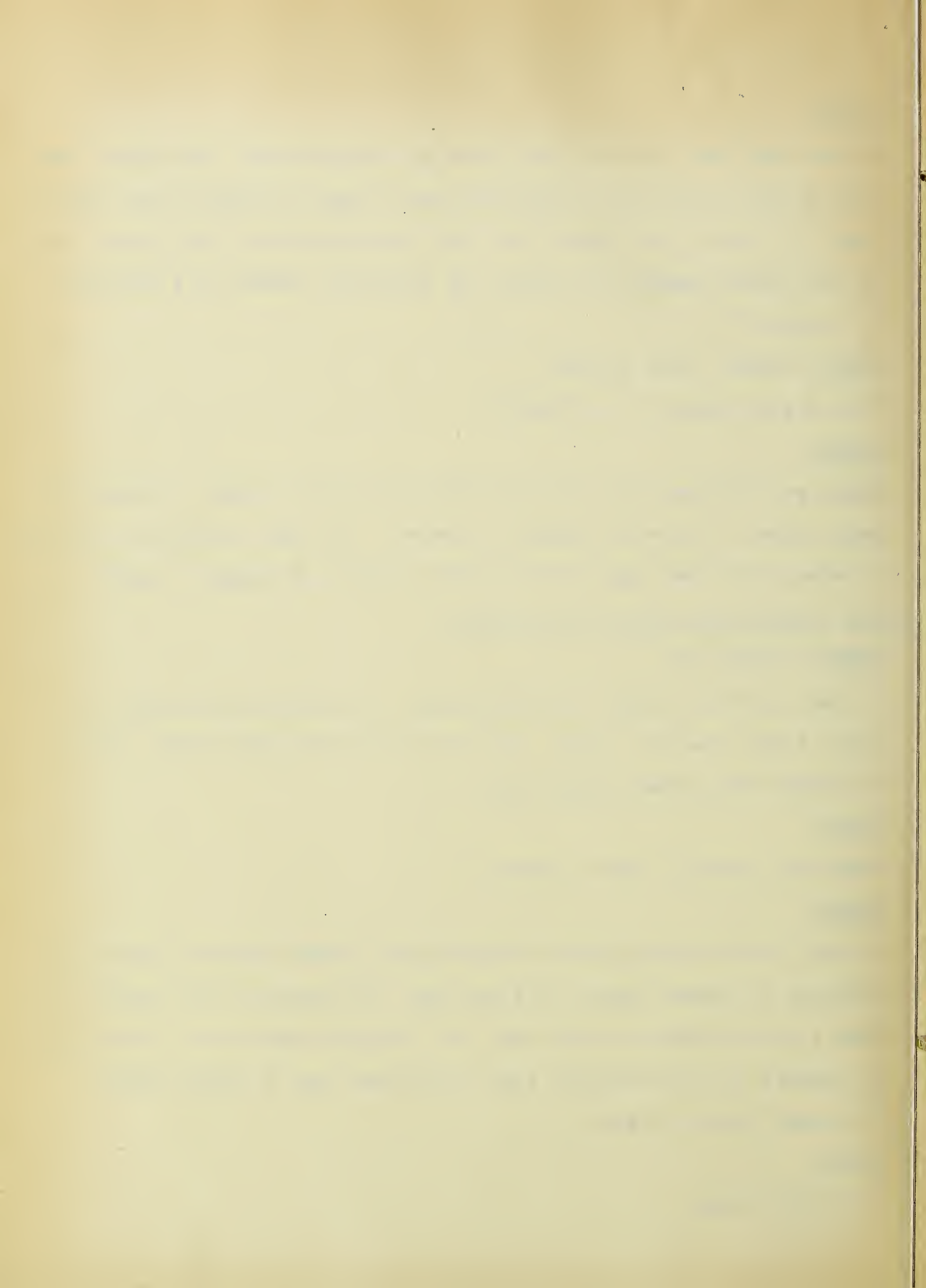
Thank you, ma'am. That's plenty.

DENNIS

Yes sir, we've raised about everything we needed since we moved from Kentucky to Warren County 20 years ago. The land's a lot better, too. When a gully starts, we see that it's stopped right now. We use plenty of legumes in our rotation, even if we have just a little place. We've got plenty to eat.

TRAMP

I can tell that.



FLORA

And Mister Taylor was as poor as Job's turkey when we were married.

TRAMP

You're a good cook, ma'am.

FLORA

And he never had no schoolin', either.

DENNIS

I never had schoolin', but I got learnin' -- the hard way. Now, as to farming -- oh, but you wouldn't know about that,

TRAMP

There -- that's enough. Oh, I know plenty about farming. I used to work for Mike Fink.

DENNIS

Mike Fink?

FLORA

Mike Fink? Oh, yes, you've heard of him, Dennis. He was the king of the river boats. (TO TRAMP) But he wasn't any farmer!

TRAMP

Once upon a time he was. I've heard him tell about how when he was a boy he'd put on his fur cap and help his paw clear the land, plow the soil, gather the corn, or dig the potatoes.

FLORA

He was from Pennsylvania, I recollect.

TRAMP

Yes'm, eastern Pennsylvania, where there wasn't a hill big enough to cool off on, or a river big enough for a good swallow. His folks just had one cow. Junny thing about that cow. It had a holler between its shoulders so big that Mike had to chase it around in wet weather, just to bail its back out.

DENNIS

Hmmf! Fool idea. He mustn't have been much of a worker.

TRAMP

He was, though. Powerful, strong guy, Mike was. You know what he did? Once he fought a duel with a thunderbolt. Came off without a scratch, too. At the first fire, he split that thunderbolt all to flinders, and gave the pieces to Uncle Sam's army to touch the cannon off with. Well, that was a fine dinner ma'am. Now I'll be going, if you don't mind.

FLORA

Just as you like.

DENNIS

I've got a few things to show you first.

TRAMP

Well, I thought I'd be getting along.

DENNIS

I've got a few things I want to show you.

TRAMP

Yes sir. And thanks for the meal, ma'am.

DENNIS

Come on out here.

SOUND: Door opens and closes...

DENNIS

What do you see?

TRAMP

Well, there's them Plymouth Rock Chickens, and that nice garden....

DENNIS

What else?

TRAMP

Listen, mister, I don't want to be taking up any more of your time.

DENNIS

What do you see?

TRAMP

Nice field of clover. And those cows look mighty good. But mister, I guess I'd better be getting along. I've got a fur piece to go.

DENNIS

I want to show you the smokehouse. Right here.

SOUND: Old door creaks open...

TRAMP

Gee!

DENNIS

Now what do you see?

TRAMP

Oh, there hams and slabs of bacon. Lot of them aren't they?

DENNIS

Come on out.

SOUND: Old door is slammed...

DENNIS

Look out there.

TRAMP

Yeah. Nice bunch of cattle. But I got to be getting on.

DENNIS

You think you're looking at clover, and hams, and cattle.
You think you're looking at fields protected from soil erosion.
You think you're looking at chickens and onions and alfalfa.
But my friend, you're looking at more than that. You're looking
at America. I don't know why you're on the road. It's none of my
business. But any man, able and willing to work, can make a living
from the soil -- if he protects that soil. He may not make much
money, but neither he, nor his family, need ever go without plenty
of food, proper clothing, a comfortable home, and a good education.
This is America.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading into...

SOUND: Night noises...

FLORA

It's so peaceful out here on the front porch tonight, Taylor.

DENNIS

Yes, it does a body good to rest after a day's work -- and know that
he has done that work as best he could.

FLORA

That was quite a lecture you gave that tramp the other day.

DENNIS

It wasn't for his benefit. It was for the boys. I knew they were
listening. I want them to learn to respect work, and to love the
soil.

FLORA

They will. They take after you.

DENNIS

The girls seem to take after you, too. I heard Ruby talking this morning about how anxious she was to get started canning those pickles.

FLORA

We've gone a long ways since we left Meniffee County, Taylor. Raised nine children, built up an eroded farm, and have all we need. Oh, we don't have money, but we have security.

DENNIS

That's what counts. Security springs from the soil.

FLORA

That means keeping the soil good -- if we keep our security.

DENNIS

Yes, and that reminds me of a poem.

FLORA

One you learned at Berea College?

DENNIS

Oh, my no. We didn't learn poems at Berea. We learned how to work!

FLORA

But what was that poem?

DENNIS

I picked it up in Middletown the other day, and it just kinda stuck in my craw. Written by a professor Hutton from somewhere out in South Dakota. J. G. Hutton, I believe his name was.

FLORA

What was it about?

DENNIS

It was called "The Worn Out Farm." I don't know if I remember it word for word, but it went something like this:

"Encompassed by a wilderness of briar and thorn,
Its garden over-run by noisome weeds,
The home round which glad children played
Stands all a-wreck, and ruin claims it for his own.

"The toppling chimney tells of home-fires dead,
The shattered pane, of light that failed;
The unhinged door unto the broken hearthstone
Admits the ghosts of those forever gone."

FLORA

How tragic.

DENNIS

There's a lot more to it. One more stanza, I recollect, went something like this:

"Of cruel tragedy the ruin speaks,
Of blighted hopes, of unrequited toil,
And he who for the cause or reason seeks
Needs but to ask the worn out, barren soil."

FLORA

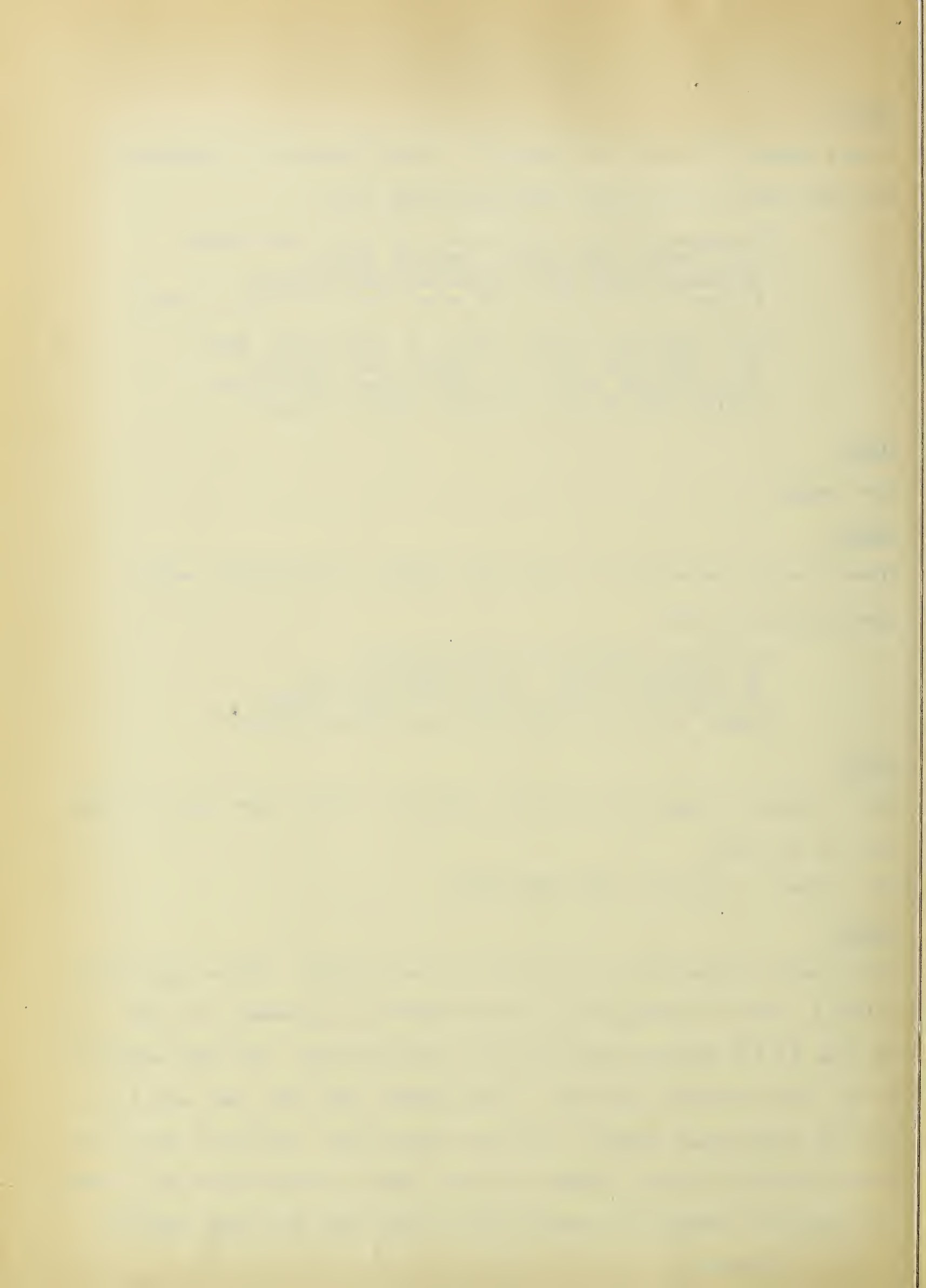
Why is there so much soil erosion, Taylor? We've been able to take care of it here.

ORGAN: Sneak in America, THE BEAUTIFUL

DENNIS

Just plain foolishness on the part of man, Flora. We've gone along blindly, never thinking that mother earth is our means of life. Yes, we took it for granted that land was everlasting. We said ownership of the land insured security. Tools would wear out, men would die -- but the land would remain. We know better now. With all this talk about national defense, maybe we don't hear so much about soil defense, but America's farmers are waking up to the need for soil defense.

(DENNIS CONTINUES)



DENNIS (CONT'D.)

They're learning to save this soil. The soil made America a great nation, and in this nation, just like I told that wandering soul, a man able and willing to work, can make a living from the soil. You see, this is America.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

Thus, the story and the philosophy of Taylor C. Dennis, farmer of Warren County, Ohio. And now, once again we turn to the United States Department of Agriculture, and speaking for the Soil Conservation Service is Ewing Jones.

JONES

AD LIBS ABOUT DENNIS FARMING OPERATIONS. And now, if you please, _____, the "Eleventh Commandment."

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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